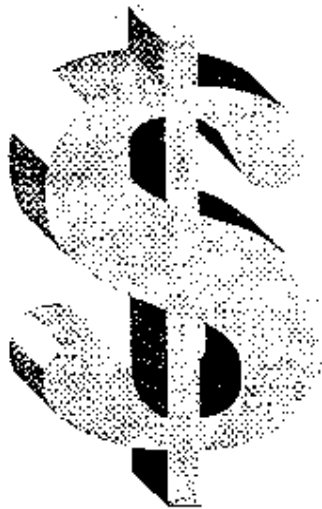


User Fee System

and

Trash Bag Survey



State Planning Office

Waste Management & Recycling Program

USER FEE SYSTEM

AND TRASH BAG SURVEY



One Disposal District's First-Year Experience

**PLEASANT RIVER SOLID WASTE
DISPOSAL DISTRICT
1998**

**Prepared by:
Pleasant Bay Management
In cooperation with
Pleasant River Solid Waste Disposal District**

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INTRODUCTION:

Pleasant River Solid Waste Disposal District, serving seven regional towns and approximately 5,000 residents, decided it was time to do something about the cost of trash disposal. The District had seen its volunteer recycling amounts level off after a few years. They also recognized that many of their costs were fixed and beyond their control. Reducing the volume of trash seemed to be the only route that could bring about the desired budget changes. Thus, waste reduction became the major goal. Switching from 100% tax based funding to a user fee system, was the method chosen to achieve that goal.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to chronicle Pleasant River's first year of experience and to provide information to other towns or solid waste districts regarding user fee systems, to help them decide on, and successfully implement a system of their own.

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BACKGROUND:

The Washington County towns of Addison, Centerville, Columbia Falls and Jonesboro were no different than most Maine communities in 1993 that were faced with closing their traditional landfills and finding other methods for trash disposal. No direction or financial aid was either offered or readily available to help them face this very complex problem - so they formed a regional committee and set out to solve the problem in the best way they could - using "downcast ingenuity".

There seemed to be only two viable options open - having the trash taken by packer trucks, collected from door to door pickups, directly to Penobscot Energy Recovery Company in Orrington - or - developing a regional transfer station to provide a consolidation point from which the waste could be trucked in 50 yard roll-off containers. The latter method eliminated the costly need for a door to door system (keeping intact the local habit of taking one's trash to the dump himself). It would also provide the ability to take care of all of the trash disposal needs of the communities - and would be less costly. It was very clear early on that doing this on a regional basis was going to save everyone money in the long run.

An educational effort was made by going to the four town and selectmen meetings, along with other special meetings. We were getting out the information on "What is it?" "How does it benefit us?" "What do we have to do?" This approach resulted in the idea gaining voter approval at the town meetings of each town.

- A site was selected that was on a major route and relatively central to all of the member towns
- A quasi-municipal, non-profit, non-taxable Corporation was set up - with each town having one director and one vote - and an Interlocal Agreement was signed by each town.
- A transfer station / recycling center was designed and was then permitted by the Department of Environmental Protection under permit by rule.
- In late 1993, the facility was constructed and open for business January 1994, ready to serve the 2,320 residents of these four communities

By the end of the first year there had been 824 tons of MSW (.355 tons per person per year) shipped to PERC with a recycling rate of 30% (308 tons). The cost per person was \$38.92 and the cost per ton was \$109.59. The recycling was all on a volunteer basis and operated out of two used truck trailers at the transfer station site, providing a one stop opportunity to both get rid MSW and recycling.

During 1995 three additional towns asked to join as owners of the corporation and were accepted - Columbia, Beals and Jonesport. Changes were made in the physical facility to accommodate the additional towns and their residents. This increased the total population being served to a total of 4,945, just under the 5,000 limit under the D.E.P. permit by rule (That limit was removed in 1998).

Because of the variance in the amount of commercial trash from two of the new towns, (compared with the other towns) a surcharge was applied to their population figures, creating what we call a "people factor" for a new total of 5,793. The "people factor" is used to distribute equitably the costs of the operation among each of the seven towns - and it did the job just fine. This factor is used to level the field among the towns involved.

To determine a "people factor", compile the combined MSW tons of the towns that appear to be of about the same make up of commercial, seasonal or industrial users. Divide that figure by the actual number of residents and the result is the tons per person for those towns. Next, divide that tons per person figure into the total MSW tons for each of the other dissimilar towns - the result will be a "people factor".

These three new towns joined at varying times during the year and the MSW tonnage increased to 1,409 tons and .378 tons per person per year. The recycling tonnage actually *decreased* to 282 tons and the percentage dropped way down as a result - (MSW tonnage went up and recycle tonnage went down). The cost per person was \$37.68 and the cost per ton dropped to \$99.30. It became clear early on - as the volume of trash goes down, the cost per ton goes up - making the cost per ton an unreliable figure to focus on. This takes place because of the fixed costs involved - loans, labor, electric, etc.

By the end of 1996, with all seven towns using the facility for a full year, the tonnage was up to 2,054 tons and back to .355 tons per person per year (which indicated that the "people factor" had been correctly done). If that "people factor" had not done the job, then the tons per person would have gone either up (new town was not paying it's share) or down (new town was being charged too much). The cost per person was \$37.32 and the cost per ton was \$105.06. Recycling tonnage increased but only to 348 tons, again with a dismal recycle percentage.

1997 finished with the same tonnage - 2,055 tons - .355 tons per person per year and with a cost of \$44.54 per person and \$105.06 per ton. Recycling moved up to 425 tons. (Most of the increased cost per person came from money invested for the coming User Fee plan).

PREPARING FOR THE CHANGE:

The Board of Directors recognized that even though we were in line with most other communities in our area with the tons and cost per person, the overall disposal costs were simply too high. In all of the member towns these costs had risen to become the second or third highest item in the annual town budget and all forecasts indicated even higher costs for the future. They recognized that there was little we could do to change the costs of trucking and tipping fees - *but we could play an important role in reducing the amount of trash that had caused those high budget amounts.* After lengthy research and reading the Margaret Chase Smith report on "pay as you throw" systems - the decision was made to move in that direction. (Sources - "Estimated Impact of Charging Maine Households by the Bag for Waste Disposal" Stephanie Seguino, Margarita Suarez, Christopher Spruce, George Criner. "Solid Waste Management (SWM)

Options: The Economics of Variable Cost and Conventional Pricing systems in Maine" Stephanie Seguino, Margarita Suarez, Jeff Young, Robert McKay, Christopher Spruce, Margaret Chase Smith Center for Public Policy, University of Maine, George Criner - Department of Resource Economics and Policy of University of Maine. "Pay-As-You-Throw", Janice Canterbury, MSW Management, "EPA Pay-As-You-Throw - Lessons Learned About Unit Pricing.)

Changing the way things have been done in the past is a hard sell in most communities and is no different in Washington County - maybe an even harder sell. PRSWDD decided that it was very important to begin the process by providing education on what this new system really was, what it would do for the communities, how it would work and what effect it would have on the individual resident. We began a project of speaking at town meetings in every town for two years preceding the implementation of this program, attending many selectmen meetings, using newspaper articles and finally preparing and distributing a brochure (part of the State Planning Office grant). Our feeling was - if they don't understand it, they will oppose it.

We were looking for a 30% - 50% reduction in the tons of trash that had to be sent to PERC - about a 25% increase in recycling - and a reduction in the overall costs by about 40%. Combined with the revenue from the sale of bags, we hoped for a 50% - 75% reduction in the amount raised from taxation. We made sure everyone was well aware of the amount of money that would stay in Washington County, and our seven communities, that had been leaving and never coming back. Our estimate for this was \$50,000 - \$60,000 *each year!*

There were many examples given of what happened in other Maine communities, (See: Estimated Impact of Charging Maine Households by the Bag for Waste Disposal), when the responsibility for paying was transferred from the tax rolls to the shoulders of those doing the actual disposing of the trash. Many taxpayers have become confused between the services they demand and the tax costs for those services - "I pay my taxes, I'm entitled to..."

Families often reduce from several bags per week to only one, older folks begin looking for the smaller bags, commercial accounts begin keeping rain water out of their dumpsters and also keep them closed or locked. Most begin to learn recycling and composting - and even begin to be concerned about the packaging on what they buy. *Perhaps most important - this system gives everyone a choice - something that has never been available in trash disposal.*

We met some of the expected objections head on (Best approach is to address these before they come up - less defensive that way):

* "We will be paying twice" - By explaining details of the system this was dispelled quickly and quite the opposite was shown to be true for most. A few will pay more - either because they pay little to nothing in taxes or they refuse to reduce their amount of trash.

* "The illegal dumping will be greatly increased" - There was an increase reported in all of the towns in the survey, however all of them reported going back to the original level within six months. (There were NO reports of increase reported to PRSWDD during the first year).

* "All of our trash will just go to our neighbor towns" - Some of that does occur in some towns, requiring those towns to make a better effort to stop the practice. (There have been no reports of any substantial increase by other surrounding towns during the first year).

* "Even if this lowers the amount paid by taxes, something else will take its place" - Does this mean no one should make an effort to reduce the cost of government?

* "We will have to pay for our own trash disposal costs under this plan" - you bet! That *is* the program. In most towns the savings will be large enough to overcome what those from away pay for the disposal they do not use.

We are hoping for a study that will show where the breakpoint is when changing to this system - when this system would adversely affect the local residents (that is, result in them having to pay more).

* "Costs to implement this program are too high" - With savings like these, such expenditures become a wise investment and are usually spread out over several years to allow the savings to make the payments.

* "Will hurt the senior citizens and the poor" - They must become part of the plan or it will not work. (To allow someone some free access will actually destroy the purpose and the expected outcome of the system). Usually the senior citizen is paying more in taxes for disposal than he will in user fees. Many of them have been recycling for years and have had little trash - they are more likely to say, "it's about time". The poor have little incentive to recycle as they pay little or nothing in taxes. They will have a large impact on the success of the system when they start recycling. (For those that really will be hurt by the change, consideration should be given to some welfare assistance, as with food, etc.).

By implementation time, few were unaware that it was coming and most had some idea what it was all about. Because PRSWDD is set up as a separate corporation wholly owned by each of the towns, there was no requirement or need for separate town meeting votes in each town - but the importance of public understanding was just as important. During the two years of discussion, education and information gathering, the board of directors voted unanimously several times to reaffirm their intent to move forward with this project.

The goal of the Board of Directors was to reduce the amount of trash being disposed of, thereby reducing the cost of that operation - and to do so by transferring at least part of the financial responsibility from the tax roles to those generating the trash.

PROGRAM DECISIONS:

WHAT ABOUT THE BAGS?

After communicating with several of the towns that had already been using some form of a pay system, the decision was made to use "paid" bags - as compared to stickers, tags or just weight. Two sized bags were chosen, one that was about 30 gallon in size that should hold about 23 pounds and a second one half that size.

As residents have become more aware of the system and how it works for them, more and are buying the smaller bags. The bag purchase was put out to bid, using the information on vendors collected from the calls to other towns. The number of bags to be purchased was solved by once again using the figures that other towns had experienced - and that worked out almost perfectly.

ADDRESSING WHAT TO CHARGE?

A goal had to be made as to what portion of the total cost of disposal was to be removed from the tax role by the new system and what the total reduction in the cost of operation should be. The decision was to try for a 75% reduction from the property taxes and an overall cost reduction of 40%. This meant, with the reduced costs, that the property taxes would still be covering about 25% with the balance being borne by the users.

For the purpose of the fee structure, the cost per ton was set at \$80 or \$.04 per pound and the cost for a large bag (based on a 23 pounds average per bag) was set at \$1 and \$.50 for the smaller one. The office personnel from each town asked for the amounts to be even for change making purposes.

A decision was made to have the sale of the bags done exclusively by the individual towns - at the town office only - and have the receipts from those sales stay with the town from which they were sold. Some towns in other areas allowed the bags to be sold in local stores, however that led to an uneven distribution of the revenue and allowed the bags to be sold to folks that were not residents at all. Bag sales revenues would be applied, by each town, to their trash disposal account to help offset the billing from the transfer station.

The bags were to be a teal color, different than most bags sold at the local stores, and had PRSWDD imprinted on them. Between this method of identification and the requirement that each vehicle have a special numbered sticker (different color for each town - and sold exclusively by each town) permanently attached to a window, we felt we could control who was using the facility.

WHAT ABOUT NON-BAGGED TRASH - (BULKY, TIRES, ETC.)?

Part of the waste stream does not lend itself to bags, some residents do not want to use the paid bags and some trash is delivered in packer trucks or by other means that do not fit a bag only system. PRSWDD purchased a 40' set of truck scales and a small platform scale to handle this need.

Residents who, for whatever reason, did not use the paid bags could either use the truck scales or the platform scales to determine the weight of the material they were to dispose of. The charge

for this, if it was MSW, is \$.04 per pound and while most pay before they leave, a monthly billing account is available for those needing that service. Those bringing non-paid bags or barrels, and being weighed on the platform scales, are charged \$.05 per pound because of the extra labor involved.

Demo debris is weighed and charged at a rate of \$.05 per pound (approximately 100% of the current cost of disposal). The only other items for which there is a charge are tires at \$2 and bulky items at \$3. The truck scales, although the most expensive item required for the change over, contribute significantly to the success of the program. In addition, they are used to weigh all trash leaving for the trip to PERC; all demo shipments and recycle material shipments are weighed - a great asset in checking the buyer's figures. The cost of the scales was \$35,000 (This included using local contractors for the cement and land work) and a 5-year bank note paid for cost. The platform scales are used, old and cost \$100, but work fine.

Money collected at the transfer station - from fees, sales of recycle materials, and from the waste weighed on the scales - is all used to reduce the amount of dollars each town is charged at the end of the month.

PLANNING FOR OPERATIONAL CHANGES

Because of the information available to us in the Margaret Chase Smith study and from other towns we contacted, we recognized there would have to be several changes in operation with the new system.

Security measures for making sure only paid items were deposited in the containers necessitated changes. This meant having one staff person at or near the disposal tub area at all times closely monitoring car stickers and being sure only paid bags were disposed of - unless other payment arrangements had been made.

A system of weighing and accounting for both the weight and payment of the non-paid bag trash had to be worked out. Part of that system and a big asset for the bookkeeping system, was the purchase of a used, reconditioned, cash register (\$150).

PROVIDING ADDITIONAL OPTIONS FOR DISPOSAL

If the system was to work as planned we felt we had to offer as many alternative options as we could for our residents to make use of.

Burn barrels were located that we could obtain for free and to sell to residents to help take care of the paper products in their waste stream that could not be recycled. A burn permit from the town is required and that prohibits burning garbage etc. After one year in operation and having sold over 500 barrels, we have not received any complaints. Some object to backyard burning from a clean air point of view, but when you look at the bag survey and find that 35% by weight is paper products - it becomes obvious this is a method that can have a large impact in reducing the amount of waste.

With the help of a local firm that provides us with wooded pallets and we in turn give these to residents for the purpose of constructing a backyard-composting bin. Between 500 - 600 of these have gone out for that purpose in the first year. Once again, the bag survey documents that 30% of the weight of an average bag is food - and most of that can be composted (all except the animal food waste).

Introduced recycling textiles to our operation in late 1997. A large percentage of this material comes through the too good to toss building. The too good to toss building had been a great option for many and this would likely attract even more folks to use it.

We were instrumental in getting our largest commercial user to send all of his waste food products to a local farmer rather than to PERC for burning.

We banned all cardboard from the MSW stream - no discarding any in the roll off tubs was prohibited leaving the choice - either recycle it or take it home. The reasons for this were two fold - 1) without the cardboard we were able to a much better job packing the tubs (increased tonnage in each one) and 2) recycling of a major moneymaking item was enhanced immediately. The acceptance was just great - no continuing objections were made.

BASELINE INFORMATION

Keeping complete records is always important, but perhaps never more so than when you are contemplating a change in systems. Once the change has been made, you will want to know just what it has meant to you. The following type of records will provide that information and copies of them will be provided as exhibits later in the report:

- A profit and loss type budget on a monthly basis for both the operation of the transfer station and for the recycle "profit center" within the operation.
- Monthly tons of MSW sent to PERC including the costs thereof and a comparison with the previous year.
- Annual cost per ton and most importantly, cost per person.
- Perhaps an accounting of the number of user vehicles that come to the transfer station/recycle center - (in some towns this would not be necessary).
- A detailed monthly accounting of the recycling activity.

PREPARING FOR RECYCLE VOLUME CHANGES

We expected an increase in our recycle tonnage of at least 25% and needed to be ready to accommodate that increase. It was very important that we not let this increase overcome us, thereby causing residents inconvenience that would lessen their desire to use the recycle option.

To help with this - and the monitoring of the disposal area above - we added one additional paid employee to our staff of three. In early 1997, in anticipation of the change of system, we built a 48' x 66' metal building with a loading dock, designed to receive and process recycle materials and to house our office, bathrooms, etc. A forklift, baler and a small glass crusher were included in that project, the total cost of which was \$135,000 - financed with a 10-year bank note.

in an effort to both reduce the overall costs and to try to provide a service to our neighbors that were not part of the district, we began processing recycle materials for a nearby town. This operation better utilizes the building, equipment and provides additional work for our employees while adding to the net income of the facility.

We had been using one of the original truck trailers for our "too good to toss" building - through which we process about 20 tons per year. We think this is the best type of recycling available. In 1998 the trailer was retired when, through a State Planning Office matching grant, we were able to purchase a 28 x 20 wooden building for that same purpose. The old trailer was retrofitted and now holds our tin cans awaiting shipment with our other metals.

PRSWDD joined Maine Resource Recovery Association in earlier years. This organization provides the marketing arm for the recycle portion of our operation. We pay them annual dues and they find the markets and arrange for the shipping at \$4 per ton of material sent. This means there is not an inordinate amount of local time spent in marketing, so we did not anticipate any change with this part of the program.

Storage of both processed - and unprocessed - materials prior to shipment is an important aspect of the operation that must be dealt with. At PRSWDD we designed the new building to include some storage area, but there is never enough. We purchased three truck trailers (two additional) to be used for additional storage and we paved a sizeable area in the rear, outside the building, to store both baled cardboard and plastics (covered with tarps). The trailers and the building are used for storage of newspaper, textiles and other unprocessed materials waiting to be baled. In 1998, the matching State Planning Office grant helped enclose the loading dock, where these trailers are located. If such storage area is, or can be made available, the option is there to wait out the market for better prices.

IMPLEMENTATION - USER FEE PLAN FIRST YEAR

With the scales installed, the staff increased, the recycling facilities revamped - we were ready to go. The user vehicle count was down from the previous year in the first month or two (see the exhibit) and there were many questions. The vast majority of the residents came to cooperate and learn - only a small number tried to fight the system and they quickly fell in line. Everyone had a choice - reduce the amount of trash or pay the price. Many, usually those that were already recycling, stated "it's about time" -

Then along came the ice storm of 1998 and we actually had to close for two open days (frozen scales, etc) - but that did not seem to create a very big problem as no one could move around enough to think of using the transfer station. In the months coming, however, we received all of the trash we would have - plus the extra created by that storm.

The reaction of the users was outstanding - many, many residents came to the office (many who had never been in the office before) asking for information on recycling and composting. They were given handouts on what could be recycled and how to prepare the material - many asked for and received the wooden pallets to begin their own backyard composting and a brochure on how

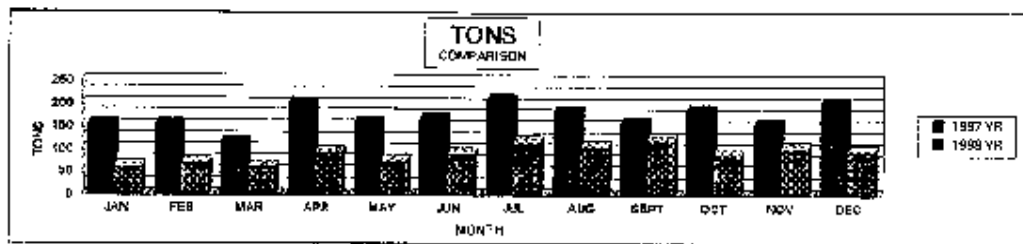
to do it - (and how proud they were later on of their accomplishment). They also created a run on our burn barrels - and the permits that the towns required. It was interesting for the staff to have a number of residents who, in the past, had said things like "I'll recycle over my dead body"- come into the office to see what this recycling "thing" was all about. The change was clearly in the motivation.

The used cash register that we had purchased began to pay for itself immediately - providing good cash security and loads of information on who the money was coming from and what it was for. About 50 residents set up the ability to charge at the time of delivery and pay each month - we actually send out about 15-20 invoices per month. We record the weekly weights for the major customers and provide receipts to all. In 1998 we took in \$37,184 from the large scales, \$4,444 from the small scales and the total from fees was \$9,946 - bringing the total collected at the transfer station to \$51,574 - all of which was used to reduce the overall cost of disposal to the towns.

Bag sales by each of the towns varied - see exhibit 7 - but took in a total of \$49,881. We suspect the variation between towns is largely the result of the percentage of trash brought to the transfer station by commercial haulers. Near the end of the year, we began to see the sales of the smaller bags begin increasing (folks were finding out that it took too long to fill the big ones). The income from the sales was retained by each town and applied to the monthly billing from the transfer station

EXHIBIT 7								
1998 MEMBER TOWN BAG SALES RECORDS								
MONTH	Addison	Beals	Centerville	Columbia	Falls	Jonesboro	Jonesport	
Population	1,114	670	30	432	672	805	1,522	
JANUARY	\$ 2,224.00	\$ 395.00	\$ 50.00	\$ 164.00	\$ 1,040.00	\$ 1,190.00	\$ 1,423.00	
FEBRUARY	\$ 810.00	\$ 311.00	\$ 10.00	\$ 174.00	\$ 151.00	\$ 526.00	\$ 567.00	
MARCH	\$ 1,120.00	\$ 423.50	\$ 34.00	\$ 277.50	\$ 509.00	\$ 534.50	\$ 614.00	
APRIL	\$ 1,198.50	\$ 559.00	\$ 11.00	\$ 340.00	\$ 436.50	\$ 672.50	\$ 875.00	
MAY	\$ 1,239.00	\$ 483.00	\$ 27.00	\$ 359.00	\$ 266.00	\$ 575.00	\$ 759.50	
JUNE	\$ 1,347.00	\$ 614.50	\$ 14.00	\$ 252.50	\$ 424.00	\$ 725.50	\$ 984.00	
JULY	\$ 1,465.50	\$ 590.50	\$ 10.00	\$ 335.00	\$ 561.50	\$ 745.00	\$ 980.50	
AUGUST	\$ 1,241.50	\$ 708.00	\$ 6.00	\$ 308.50	\$ 568.00	\$ 764.00	\$ 976.00	
SEPTEMBER	\$ 1,168.00	\$ 585.00	\$ 21.00	\$ 355.50	\$ 475.50	\$ 720.50	\$ 863.00	
OCTOBER	\$ 1,109.00	\$ 537.00	\$ 8.00	\$ 217.00	\$ 404.00	\$ 751.50	\$ 749.00	
NOVEMBER	\$ 896.50	\$ 573.00	\$ 23.00	\$ 131.00	\$ 347.00	\$ 899.50	\$ 624.00	
DECEMBER	\$ 1,428.00	\$ 554.00	\$ 28.00	\$ 231.00	\$ 297.00	\$ 1,181.00	\$ 749.50	
TOTALS	\$ 16,247.00	\$ 6,333.50	\$ 242.00	\$ 3,146.00	\$ 5,479.50	\$ 9,285.00	\$ 10,144.50	

We began tracking the tons of trash and comparing the totals with the previous year(s) - and found the reduction changed as the months went on. The reduction began high - 59% and then slowly reduced to 23% in September - back up to 52% in December. The final annual reduction was 47% - about 7 points 17.5% more than our goal.



MSW Tons disposed Of - 1997 - 1998

The cost per person - perhaps the most important figure - went from \$44.54 in 1997 to \$27.15 in 1998. The billings to the towns (the net cost to run the station) fell from \$258,080 to \$157,192, a reduction of 39% - this meant \$100,888 stayed in both Washington County and our seven towns that would have left the year before. It also means that we should be able to look forward to this same reduced cost of operation every year for some time to come. When the towns deducted the bag revenues they had received the amount to be raised by taxes fell, on average, by 58%. This was not quite the 75% we had as a goal - but an impressive figure that was enjoyed.

Recycling lived up to expectations - increasing by 27% over the previous year. The average increase in the Margaret Chase Smith study was 25%. It appears that tonnage was still increasing near the year-end.

Perhaps the most interesting figures to compare were those of the dollars that *did not leave* Washington County and our seven towns. We had estimated savings between \$50,000 and \$60,000 per year. The actual figure saved for 1998 was \$100,888 - reducing what the towns paid (without any bag sale revenue) from \$258,080 in 1997 to \$157,192. The revenues from the bag sales reduced the money to be raised by taxes by another \$49,880 - (this, of course, was a redistribution of the costs rather than a savings).

The most asked question is - "where did it all go?" If you wait for an exact answer to that question, it may be some time before you get started solving the volume problem. There seems to be no way to be sure of where it all goes, however what we can say for sure is that all of the following played a significant part:

- Recycling - Up 27%
- Composting - We gave out hundreds of wooden pallets for this purpose and are often being asked how to go about composting. We have no survey, but it is clear to us that this played a big part.
- Burning - Our area allows burn barrels and several hundred were put into use, burning a large portion of the average 35% of paper products in each bag.
- Reuse - Likely that reuse of many items took place knowing that to throw them away was going to cost money.
- Rain Water - Suddenly water disappeared from the packer trucks, etc. - who wants to pay for water - closing the cover became the thing to do.

- Security - Again, closing and securing dumpsters became the thing to do.
- Purchasing - Many have been talking about buying with an eye towards disposal costs - *now that they have to pay.*

It does not seem that much went the way of some predictions:

- Illegal Dumping - While we cannot be *sure* what happened in this area, there have not been reports made at the transfer station, of any *increase* in this activity.
- Diversion to Other Towns - Again, there have been no substantiated reports of this occurring, although it is not possible to state that none went that way.

TRASH BAG SURVEY

Recognizing what was *in* the average trash bag was very important - both in realizing what alternate disposal methods would be needed - and setting a base line to know what changes actually took place after implementation of the new system. With this in mind, the State Planning Office developed a grant to conduct a bag content survey before implementation of the new system and another one-year later - September 1997 and September 1998.

Nine (paid) volunteers were recruited and 40 similar sized bags were removed from the roll-off tubs throughout the day. Care was taken to be sure they came from each of the communities in the district and that they each contained about the same amount of material. These were set aside and the following day the actual survey began - outdoors, if you please.

One at a time, each bag was opened and the contents were displayed on a plastic covered table. The contents were carefully sorted and then placed in 36 totes, which were labeled as to the tote's contents. After the sorting was completed for five bags, the contents of each tote was weighed and recorded. The table was cleaned and the process started again and continued until all 40 bags had been surveyed. The waste went into the roll-off tubs and the recycle items into the proper recycle bins

The results are shown in exhibit number 1.

EXHIBIT #1						
MATERIAL		TOTAL	AVER	1998	1997	1996
		40 BAGS	PER BAG	% BAG	% BAG	+/-
Paper	High Grade	2.85	0.07	0.390%	2.0%	
	Newspaper	51.5	1.29	7.157%	5.0%	
	Corr Cardboard	10.15	0.25	1.411%	9.0%	
	Magazines	24.95	0.62	3.467%	4.0%	
	Telephone Books	0	0.00	0.000%	0.0%	
	Other paper	146.4	3.66	20.346%	15.0%	
				32.78%	35%	-6.35%
Glass	Clear Containers	21.8	0.55	3.030%	2.0%	
	Green/Brown Cont	2.5	0.06	0.347%	0.0%	
	Other (Windows, mirrors, bulbs	4.05	0.10	0.563%	2.0%	
				3.94%	4.0%	-1.50%
Metals	Aluminum	8	0.20	1.112%	1.0%	
	Tin/Steel Cans	32.2	0.81	4.475%	3.0%	
	Ferrous Metals	4.1	0.10	0.570%	1.0%	
	Non-ferrous Metals	1.65	0.04	0.229%	0.0%	
				6.39%	5.0%	27.72%
Plastics	HDPE Cont #2	11.05	0.28	1.536%	1.0%	
	Rigid Cont, other	15.7	0.39	2.182%	2.0%	
	Bags	27.55	0.69	3.629%	3.0%	
	Other Plastics	13.95	0.35	1.839%	2.0%	
				8.49%	8.0%	18.57%
Returnables		3	0.08	0.417%	1.0%	
				0.42%	1.0%	-58.31%
Textiles, leather						
Rubber	shoes & clothes	15.75	0.39	2.189%	6.0%	
				0.42%	6.0%	-93.05%
Organics	Mixed Yard waste	0	0.00	0.000%	Included	
	smll branches	3.1	0.08	0.431%	Included	
	Food Waste	188.55	4.71	26.204%	30.0%	
	Wood Waste					
	smll boards, etc	7.6	0.19	1.058%	Included	
	Leaves	0.5	0.01	0.069%	Included	
				1.279%	Included	
				29.04%	30.0%	-3.20%
Cat Litter/pet bedding		30.9	0.77	4.294%	0.0%	
				4.29%	0.1%	
Disposable Diapers		8.74	0.22	1.215%	3.0%	
				1.21%	3.0%	-59.51%
Batteries		2.3	0.06	0.320%	0.0%	
				0.32%	0.0%	
Hazardous Household	Oil filters, cleaners, paint	7.55	0.19	1.049%	1.0%	
				1.05%	1.0%	4.93%
Household demo debris		3.2	0.08	0.445%	1.0%	
				0.44%	1.0%	-55.53%
Miscellaneous		5.2	0.16	0.862%	0.0%	
				0.86%	0.0%	
Furnishings/Carpeting		0	0.00	0.000%	1.0%	
				0.00%	1.0%	
Cosmetics/Toiletries		4.15	0.10	0.577%	1.0%	
				0.58%	1.0%	-42.32%
Composites		43.05	1.08	5.983%	4.0%	
				5.98%	4.0%	49.57%
Styrofoam		5.25	0.13	0.730%	1.0%	
				0.73%	1.0%	-27.04%
Egg Cartons		2.1	0.05	0.292%	0.0%	
				0.29%	0.0%	
TOTALS		719.54	17.99	100.00%		

Several additional observations were made as a result of the survey:

The bags on the whole, were more full *after* the implementation of the user fees system. Likely, "I paid \$1 for it, so I'm going to get the most out of it"(or into it).

Staff noted that many of the most active recyclers were not using even the small bags, but rather opting for regular kitchen type bags and having them weighed on the platform scales. The amount of trash they were generating was that small.

You can readily see, after reading exhibit 1, the average bag of household trash contained - by weight:

33% to 35% paper products - *100% of these can either be recycled, composted or burned.*

26% to 30% food products - *almost all food (not animal products) can be composted rather than being sent out to burn at PERC.*

.5% to 1% returnables - *it is hard to imagine these are discarded in this manner at all - but they often are. PRSWDD collects them on a volunteer basis for the income.*

8% to 9% plastics - *most of which can be easily recycled. The number of plastic bags was astounding. Pleasant River recycles these plastic bags and gives them out free to many takers.*

This bag survey information demonstrates the opportunity that exists (and the magnitude of it) for change in our system - to a method that *encourages* the removal of a large percentage of these materials from our waste stream, and for which there are currently alternate disposal methods available.

PRSWDD has free burning of yard waste at the transfer station; so many communities might find a larger percentage of yard type of material in their bags. Cat litter is extremely heavy and largely consists of clay. PRSWDD had been burying this material, without charge, but was required to stop the practice by DEP shortly before the start of the new system.

BASIC GUIDE FOR A USER FEE PLAN

PRELIMINARIES

- Recognize that the best approach to keeping disposal costs under control is to reduce the quantity of trash.
- Take the time to study the results of over 65 Maine municipalities that have chosen this route already. Research all of the information you can and learn from their successes and mistakes.
- Plan on a one to two year public education program. The need for understanding is crucial to public acceptance of this change in every town and district. Remember most folks resist any change and they vote "no" when they do not comprehend the reasons for that change.
 - Use newspaper Articles
 - Discuss at both town meetings and selectmen meetings
 - Prepare and print a brochure - *Why do this, What is it, What does it do for me, What do I have to do.*
 - Distribute the brochure at the usual locations - and at the transfer station - remember these are the folks that will be most interested.
 - Address the expected objections BEFORE they are presented to you.

KEEPING TRACK

- Prepare a baseline of your current information before starting - tons, cost per ton, cost per person, percentage of recycling, tons recycled and a detailed financial statement. You will never know how well you have done with a new system unless you know where you were before you started the change. Be sure to include all costs related to the disposal or recycling of your community's trash.
- Make sure each town involved is reasonably equal in the amount of trash per year, per person. If not, then you will need to examine the reasons for the variance. Often times this will be caused by one town having more commercial / manufacturing establishments or a larger seasonal fluctuation. Creating a "people factor" for the town(s) with the extra waste can equalize this. The distribution of the costs of operation must be fair and equal or problems are sure to follow.

To determine a "people factor", compile the combined MSW tons of the towns that appear to be of about the same make up of commercial, seasonal or industrial users. Divide that figure by the actual number of residents and the result is the tons per person for those towns. Next, divide that tons per person figure into the total MSW tons for each of the other dissimilar towns - the result will be a "people factor".

- Decide what you are going to do about the trash that needs to be weighed - from packer trucks, mixed loads, etc. Forty-foot (40') truck scales installed cost between \$35,000 - \$40,000 but will likely pay for themselves in a reasonable time. It is important to address the need for weighing as some material will surely have to come in this way. To allow that trash to be weighed outside of the facility invites problems. Small platform scales are needed also, but are much less costly.

FACILITY DESIGN AND OVERSIGHT

- Determine what type of system you think is best for your town or district - *bags, tags or stickers*. Decide what percent of the total cost you want to remove from the tax rolls and place on the shoulders of the user. Using an average of 23 pounds per bag will help determine the cost to be charged per pound and per bag.
- Locations for and the system to be used, in the sale of the "paid" bags must be decided on. Some towns require that all sales be made at the town offices of each town. Under this system all of the proceeds stay with that town and are credited to the trash disposal account - not becoming any part of the transfer station books. Other towns provide for more public convenience and allow the bags to be sold at commercial locations within the communities. It should be noted, however that this method mixes up what town the sales came from (if there is more than one town involved) and exposes the sale of the bags to outsiders. Record keeping of the bag sales should be kept and provided to each town.
- Part of the user fee system requires handling material other than MSW. Demo debris is usually done by weight and therefor a cost per pound needs to be decided upon; bulky items, tires, etc are usually charged for with a set fee - which needs to be set in advance.
- Alternate methods of disposal must be readily available for the public to make this type of system work. They will want to reduce their trash to save money - and reduce they will! You should expect an increase of at least 25% in the recycle tonnage - more if you are not doing much recycling now.
- Current contracts need to be addressed - are there any minimum tonnage requirements with either PERC or your transporting company? What volume was discussed with your hauler - will a 30% - 50% reduction violate these agreements? PERC requirements can be negotiated.

PROVIDING DISPOSAL ALTERNATIVES

- Recycling - be sure you are ready for and staffed properly to handle the projected increase - also that your facility can actually handle such an increase. You may want to revisit your storage areas, your handling methods and also your marketing arrangements. If this area gets over loaded you may turn off many folks from future efforts.

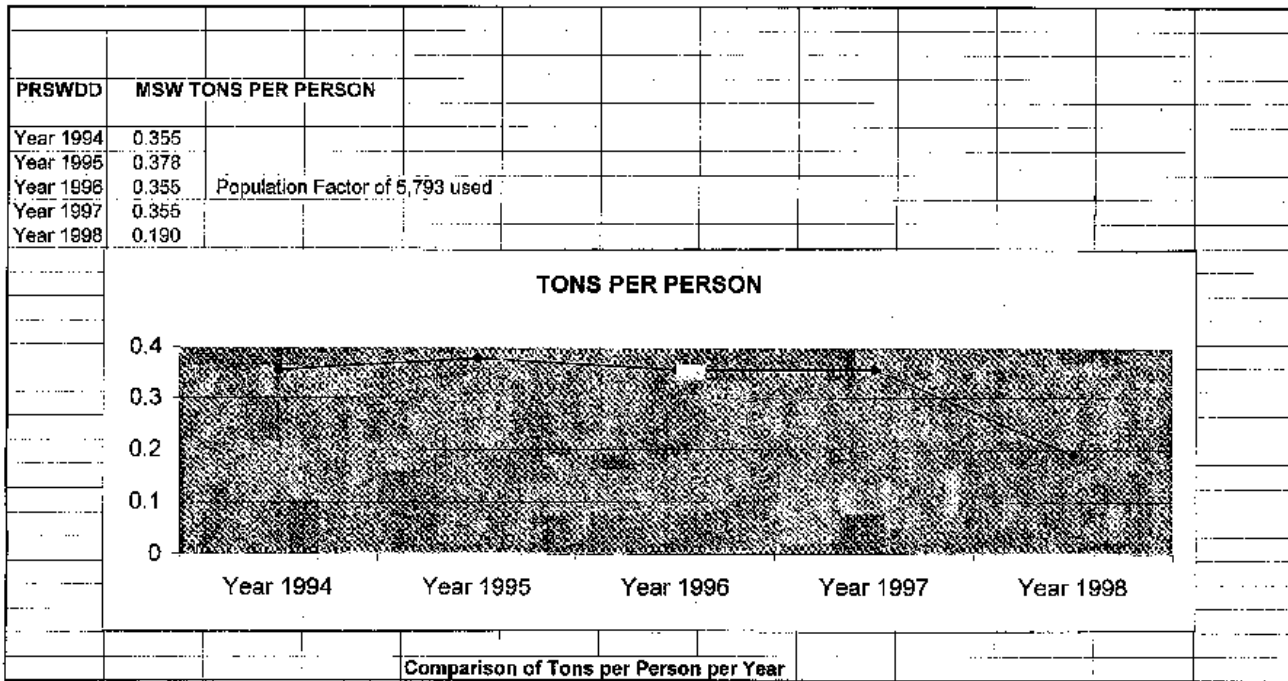
Depending on the expected volume, you may want to look into processing (baling) the material on site - or - you may want to send it out to a regional town that already provides that service.

- Review the items you are now recycling and see what new items, if any, could be added to coincide with the new program.
- Composting - is a very important alternative method. Remember that 30% of the weight of the average bag is food. While all 30% cannot be composted, this provides a great place to start reducing. Perhaps you can provide wooden pallets for composting bins or provide a source for specific recycle tumblers.
- Burn Barrels - these are controversial, and in fact are not legal in some areas of Maine, they are legal with a permit in other areas. Before you discount them, remember that 35% by weight of the average trash bag was made up of paper products - 100% of which can either be recycled, composted or burned.
- Start a "Too Good To Toss" operation (the very best way to recycle) and watch it take off. There is *great* public acceptance and you will be filling a big need. A spin off from this is your ability to recycle and market textiles to add to your "profit"

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM A USER FEE PROGRAM

- A reduction of MSW of between 30% and 50%. Add your tipping fee and your cost per ton to transport and multiply that times the estimated tons to be saved to estimate your gross savings per year.
- An increase in your income from the sale of recycle materials.
- A reduction in the cost of disposal being charged to the town(s) of 30% to 50% (depending on what your goal is)
- A reduction is the amount to be raised by taxes - after deducting bag sales revenues - of 50% to 75% (again depending on the goal you set).
- If you do not provide door to door pickup (and perhaps even with that service), a possible profit for your recycle efforts.

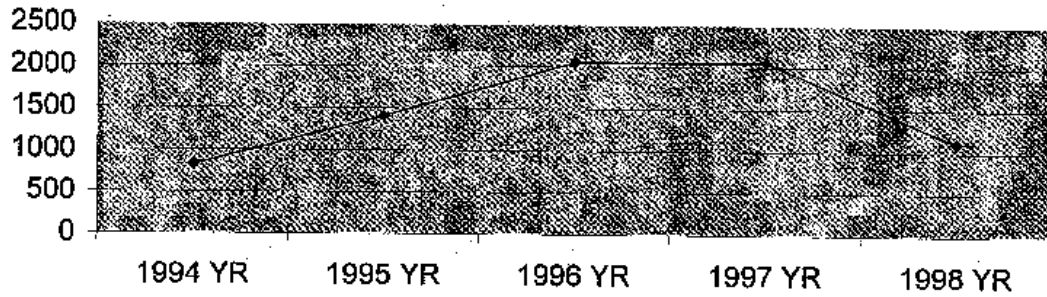
- It is very likely that there will be added costs - amortizing the scales, any other additions or changes to the facility. You may well require at least one additional staff person. Compare this, however to your expected savings and you will see a very good investment.
- A system that provides a choice for all - If you are willing to reduce your trash, you pay less - if not, you pay more.



PRSWDD

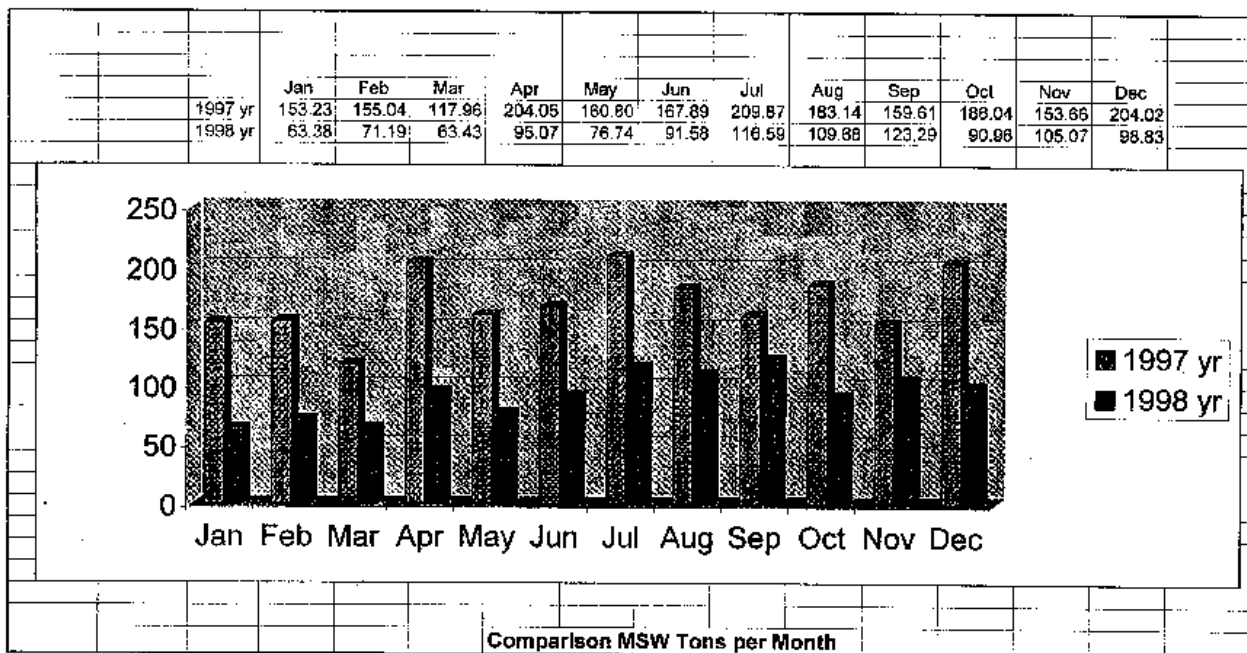
1994 YR	1995 YR	1996 YR	1997 YR	1998 YR
823	1409	2053	2056	1108

MSW TONS PER YEAR



Comparison of Tons of MSW per Year

NOTES: Year 1994 had 4 towns - population of 2,321
 Year 1995 had 3 additional towns join at various points in the year
 Year 1996-1998 had 7 towns and an actual population of 4,945 and a "people factor" of 5,793.
 User Fee Program began January 1, 1998
 Tonnage is back to between the totals for 1994 and 1995
 283 tons or 34% over 1994 and the original 4 towns.



USER FEE SYSTEM PROGRESSION				START DATE 7-1-98		FEE/PROG			
PLEASANT RIVER SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL DISTRICT									
DATE	TONS 1997	TONS 1998	CHANGE FRM 1997	\$ BILLED 1997	TOWNS 1998	CHANGE +/-	BAG SALES	REDUCTION TAX ROLLS	
JAN	153.23	63.38	-59%	\$20,490.88	\$12,414.36	-39%	\$6,486.00		
FEB	165.04	71.19	-54%	\$19,001.06	\$12,618.60	-34%	\$2,549.00		
MAR	117.96	53.43	-55%	\$19,948.30	\$13,417.45	-33%	\$3,512.50		
APR	204.05	95.07	-53%	\$20,082.97	\$14,538.18	-28%	\$4,092.50		
MAY	160.8	78.74	-52%	\$21,089.17	\$16,687.39	-21%	\$3,708.50		
JUN	167.89	91.58	-45%	\$19,553.02	\$12,586.86	-36%	\$4,341.50		
JUL	209.87	116.59	-44%	\$25,677.76	\$13,799.31	-46%	\$4,688.00		
AUG	183.14	109.68	-40%	\$17,879.90	\$5,418.57	-70%	\$4,572.00		
SEP	159.81	123.29	-23%	\$21,251.12	\$10,115.40	-52%	\$4,188.50		
OCT	186.04	90.96	-51%	\$24,547.35	\$14,182.46	-42%	\$3,775.50		
NOV	153.66	105.07	-32%	\$22,871.80	\$14,745.34	-36%	\$3,484.00		
DEC	204.02	98.93	-52%	\$25,877.76	\$16,687.60	-35%	\$4,468.50		
TOTALS	2066.31	1095.81	-47%	\$258,080.89	\$157,192.62	-39%	\$49,876.50	-58%	

COST PER			
PERSON	1997	1998	CHANGE
JAN	\$3.53	\$2.14	-39%
FEB	\$3.28	\$2.18	-34%
MAR	\$3.44	\$2.32	-33%
APR	\$3.48	\$2.51	-27%
MAY	\$3.64	\$2.86	-21%
JUN	\$3.38	\$2.17	-36%
JUL	\$4.43	\$2.38	-46%
AUG	\$3.09	\$0.94	-70%
SEP	\$3.67	\$1.75	-52%
OCT	\$4.24	\$2.45	-42%
NOV	\$3.96	\$2.55	-35%
DEC	\$4.43	\$2.68	-35%
YR TOTAL	\$44.54	\$27.15	-39%

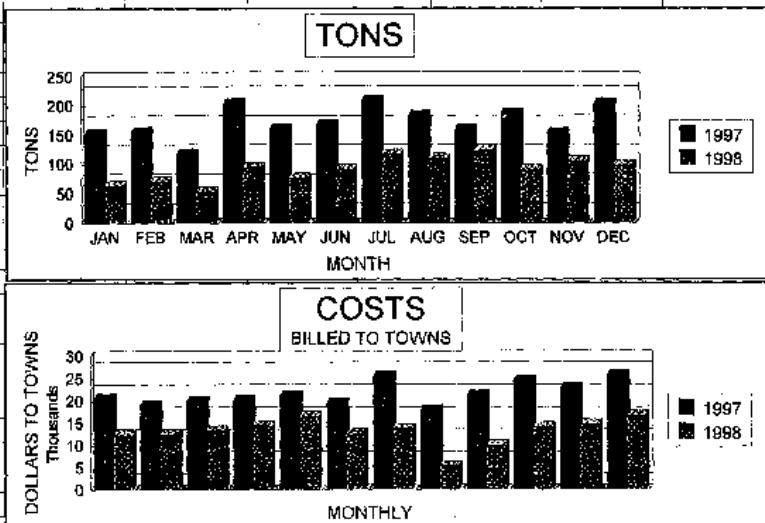
TONS

MONTH	1997	1998
JAN	153.23	63.38
FEB	165.04	71.19
MAR	117.96	53.43
APR	204.05	95.07
MAY	160.8	78.74
JUN	167.89	91.58
JUL	209.87	116.59
AUG	183.14	109.68
SEP	159.81	123.29
OCT	186.04	90.96
NOV	153.66	105.07
DEC	204.02	98.93

COSTS
BILLED TO TOWNS

MONTHLY	1997	1998
JAN	\$20,490.88	\$12,414.36
FEB	\$19,001.06	\$12,618.60
MAR	\$19,948.30	\$13,417.45
APR	\$20,082.97	\$14,538.18
MAY	\$21,089.17	\$16,687.39
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SEP	\$21,251.12	\$10,115.40
OCT	\$24,547.35	\$14,182.46
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DEC	\$25,877.76	\$16,687.60

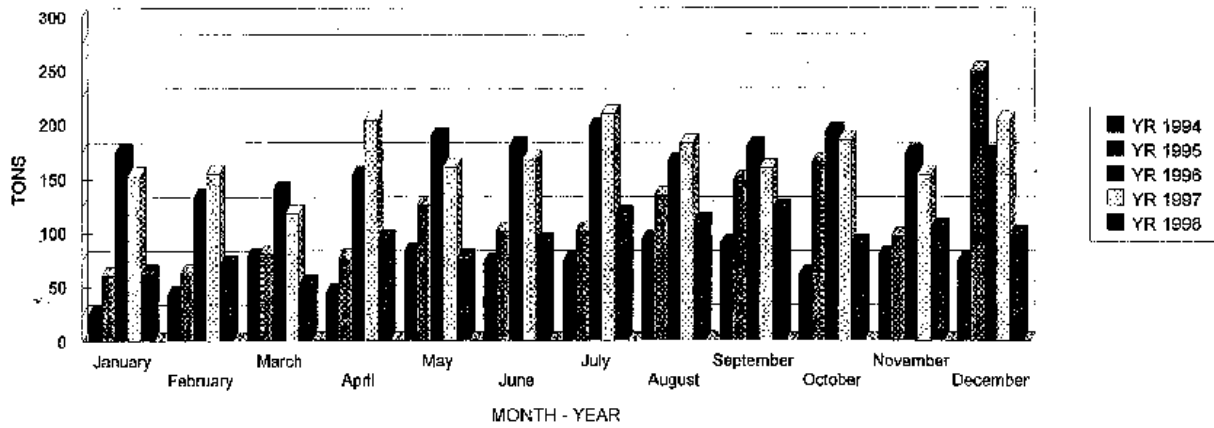
User Fee Program Progress - Per Month



User Fee Program Progress - Per Month

TON98CHA	YR 1994	YR 1995	YR 1996	YR 1997	YR 1998
January	26	61	174	153	83
February	43	63	133	155	71
March	78	81	140	118	53
April	45	77	153	204	95
May	83	126	189	161	77
June	73	102	181	168	92
July	74	102	196	210	117
August	94	135	166	183	110
September	90	149	180	160	123
October	62	166	194	186	91
November	80	97	173	154	105
December	75	250	172	204	99

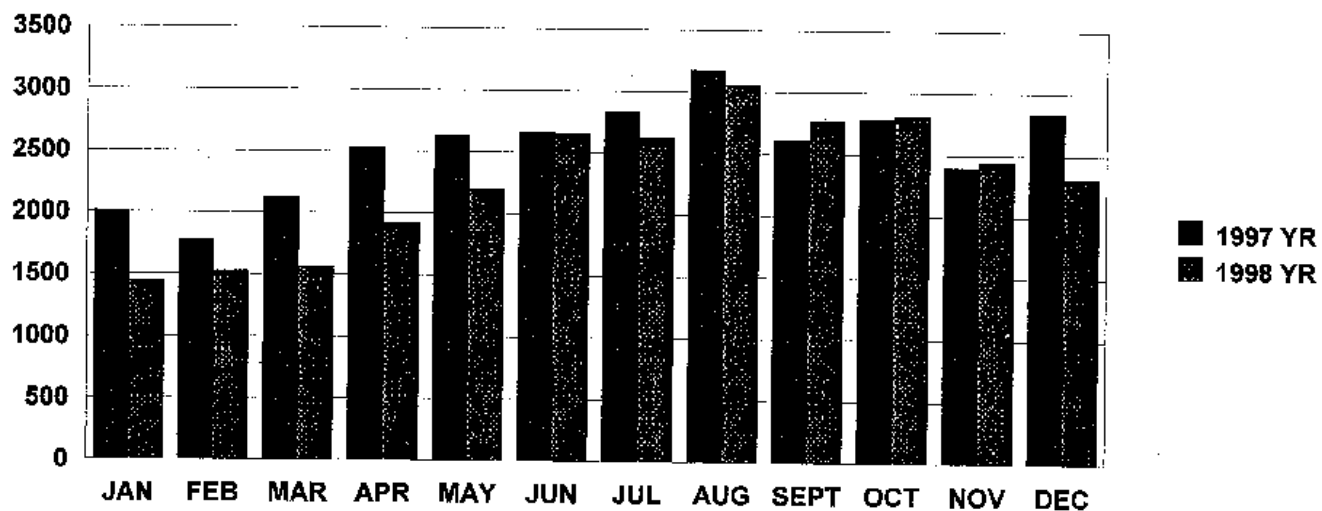
MSW TONS
MONTH - YEAR COMPARISON



Five Year - MSW Tons Comparison

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
1997 YR	2014	1781	2130	2532	2634	2662	2836	3175	2611	2784	2400	2835
1998 YR	1451	1524	1586	1923	2199	2655	2628	3051	2765	2810	2440	2315

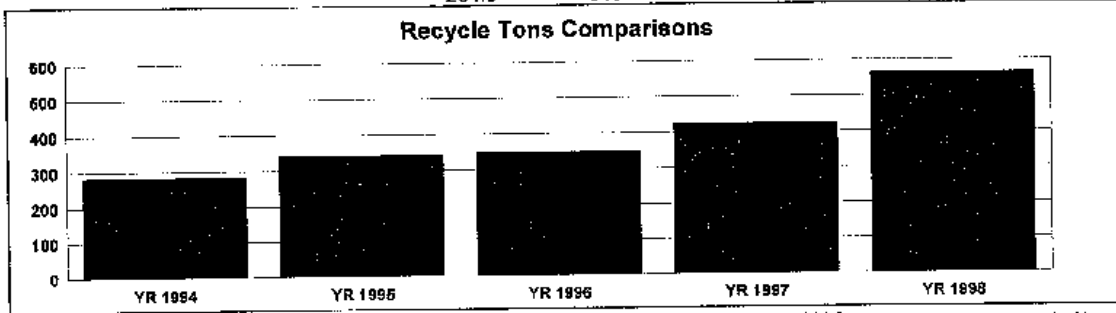
VEHICLE USERS



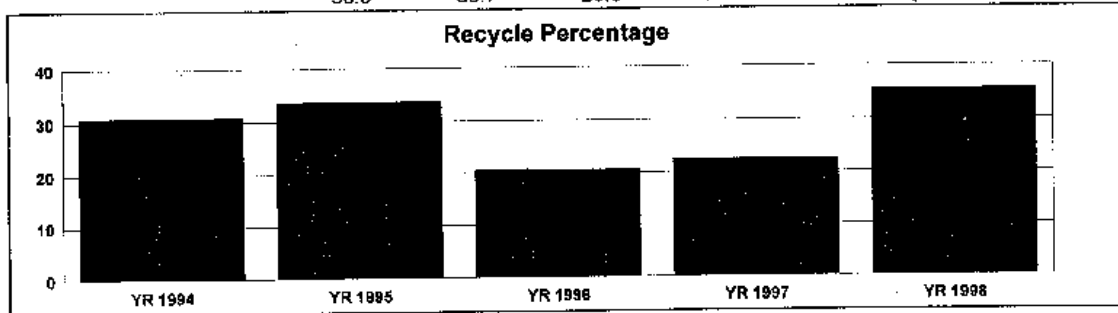
User Vehicle Comparison - by Month

RECYCLING EFFORTS - 1998														RECYCLES		NOTE: Figures from C&M for 1997 were 360,000 (error)		
ONLY ITEMS SOLD OR SHIPPED ARE INCLUDED																		
ITEM	INVENTORY REVERSE	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	YEAR END INVENTORY	C&M 152,400 ELMERS	TOTAL POUNDS	PRSWDD TONS	CONTRACT TONS
SMALLER MSW																		
CARDBOARD	(74,000)						26,400		108,880	12,040	0			39,840	181,360	283,820	147	
CONTRACT OCC	D						84,100		44,880	20,820	30,060			31,400		181,280		86
METALS, SMALL		350	350	350	1,008	350		360	360	360	350		350	14,580		20,555	10	
NEWSPAPER	(25,200)				42,800				28,760		34,140			22,820		103,120	52	
CONTRACT ONP									14,880		6,280			15,440		36,560		18
WHITE OFFICE PAPER	(3,780)													8,135		4,395	2	
CONTRACT WHITE PAPER														2,825		2,825		
PAPER & PLASTIC BAGS	(20)												7	100		67	0	
PLASTIC - CLEAR	(4,600)													9,403		4,603	2	
-CONTRACT														1,537		1,537		1
PLASTIC - COLORED	(2,000)													4,841		2,841	1	
- CONTRACT														619		619	0	
BURN BARRELS														6,000		6,000	3	
STYROFOAM PEANUTS														180		180	0	
GLASS														19,800		19,800	10	
WOOD - IN/ICE STORM																40,000	20	
WOODEN PALLET - REUSED														25,800		25,800	13	
TIRES - REUSED																5,078	3	
TIRES - TO PERC		1,800	1,800	1,440	2,160	1,800	2,160	2,520	2,520	2,880	2,160	2,520	2,520	1,950		26,280	13	
BATTERIES	0						1,600			800				1,950		4,350	2	
TEXTILES	(8,000)						10,350							8,640		10,990	5	
"TOO GOOD TO TOSSE TRAILER"	(2,000)	1,194	2,214	1,851	1,954	4,207	2,013	2,207	1,546	2,241	1,508	2,360	2,230	2,000		25,555	13	
PERC RECYCLE CREDIT - 1997	0		101,620													101,620	51	
FOOD TO FARMERS	This is C&M Supermarket and it goes to Jimmy Watson at est 150¢ per week															7,800	4	
MONTHLY POUNDS	(119,780)	3,344	105,884	3,541	47,749	15,707	97,623	6,077	201,286	39,131	74,498	5,237				480,627	240	
MONTHLY TONS	(60)	2	53	2	24	8	49	3	101	20	37	3				240	0	
YEAR TO DATE TONS	(60)	(56)	(5)	(3)	20	28	78	50	181	200	238	240				839	352	118
PERC DIVERTED COST SAVINGS																		
LARGER NON-PERC ITEMS																		
METALS, LARGE																		
COMPOST	(220,000)					323,340		129,360						142,840		375,360	188	
PRSWDD 539 OTHER 115																		
Combined Total Tons																		
MSW 1998 1,106 1,997 % 46% corrected from 1997 figures																		
Recycle 539 425 27%																		
Demo 184 49 235%																		
1,806 2,529																		
% Recycl 30% 17% 76%																		
Error in 1997 Commercial OCC figures																		
Showed 213.8 tons - should have been 103.6																		
Total error 110 tons or corrected grand total for																		
PRSWDD of 425.10																		
net increase 1998 114																		
% increase 27%																		

YR 1994	YR 1995	YR 1996	YR 1997	YR 1998
284.5	343	348	425.1	564



YR 1994	YR 1995	YR 1996	YR 1997	YR 1998	These incl'd 5% + 2 1/2%
30.9	33.7	20.6	22.5	35.5	←



PRSWDD		RECYCLE P&L	1998
INCOME		EXPENSES	
Misc	\$ 369.86	Forklift	
Metals, Small	\$ 285.41	Lease	\$ 1,747.65
Metals, Large	\$ 4,526.40	Fuel	\$ 597.18
Coardboard	\$ 7,890.94	Build/Equip	
Newspaper	\$ 2,140.58	80%	\$ 13,745.76
Paper Bags	\$ 44.50	Education	\$ 101.75
Plastics	\$ -	Contract towns	\$ 1,115.64
Returnables	\$ 558.25	Misc	\$ 3,554.80
Textiles	\$ 565.38	Supplies	\$ 954.59
Other	\$ 1,893.00	Payroll	\$ 13,355.26
Batteries	\$ 96.00		
Sub Total	\$ 18,150.32		\$ 35,172.73
	Income	\$ 18,150.32	
	Expenses	\$ 35,172.73	
	Sub Total	\$ (17,022.41)	
328 tons @ \$72.23	Avoided Costs	\$ 23,691.44	
	Profit / (loss)	\$ 6,669.03	
(People Factor - 5793)	Per Person	\$ 1.15	
(Based on 561 Total Tons)	Per Ton	\$ 11.89	

Income	
Expenses	
Avoided Costs	
\$ 18,150.32	
\$ 35,172.73	
\$ 23,691.44	

Total Costs - all	\$ 157,193.00	Recycle Income	\$ 18,150.00
+Recycle Income	\$ 18,150.00	Recycle Exp	\$ 35,173.00
-Recycle Exp	\$ (35,173.00)	Cost	\$ 17,023.00
	\$ 140,170.00	Total tons	561
	1,105.00	Net Cost/ton	\$ 30.34
	\$ 126.74		

Tipping & Transport		Avoided Costs:		Profit	
		▶ @ \$72.23		Per Ton	
		328 tons	\$ 23,691.00	\$ 20.33	
		561 tons	\$ 40,521.00	\$ 41.89	
Total Trash Costs		▶ @ 126.74			
		328 tons	\$ 41,571.00	\$ 74.84	
		561 tons	\$ 71,101.00	\$ 96.40	

What do we have to do?

- ☒ Buy 30-gallon size plastic bags from your town office.
- ☒ Make sure the bags are tied at the top when you are ready to dispose of them.
- ☒ Bring the bags to the Transfer Station as usual and throw them in the tubs or pay a hauler, who does not mix your paid bags with the other trash, to bring them in for you

Or...

- ☒ You can make arrangements with any other hauler - who mixes or uses a packer truck - and pay by the pound without purchasing the special bags.



Other communities that have this plan tell us that any increase in illegal dumping on the roads or in the woods returns to the current level within six months.

Pleasant River Transfer Station
Post Office Box 222
Addison, Maine 04606
(207) 483-4490



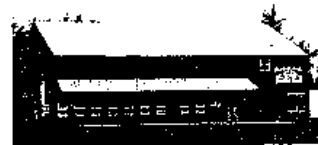
Printed on 100% Recycled Paper

The User Fee Plan

What is it?

How does it benefit us?

What do we have to do?



2020-2021

The less you throw away,
the less you pay!



RECYCLE
REDUCE
REUSE
COMPOST
BUY BETTER
BURN



Come on down and see
your new recycle building!

What is it?



The "User Fee" system is a proven method of reducing the amount of trash by having those who throw it away pay for it.

The system works:

- ▶ through your purchase of special plastic bags from your town office or...
- ▶ through paying by the pound at the Transfer Station for loose items, including demo debris and mixed-load trash carried by packer trucks, or...
- ▶ through paying on a fee basis for tires and bulky items (couches, mattresses, chairs, etc.) just as you presently do

Free items

- ▶ Recyclable items (such as cardboard, newspaper, white paper, plastic milk bottles, colored plastic bottles, clear and colored glass) and returnables
- ▶ Metals, wood and brush, cat litter, wallboard, used oil
- ▶ Items donated to the "Too Good to Toss" trailer - Your trash could be someone else's treasure



How does it benefit us?

- Increases recycling by about 25%
- Reduces the amount of trash sent to PERC to be burned by an estimated 30-50%. This amounts to at least a \$60,000 savings *per year*.
- Reduces the amount to be raised by taxes by about two-thirds.
- Reduces overall costs at the Transfer Station by about 20%

Your town will be billed as usual- however:

- The town will keep the money from the bags purchased
- The amount of the billing will be reduced by the money collected from commercial haulers and others paying by the pound - and further reduced by the savings from less trash to burn and more income from recycling
- Unlike the present system, paid for entirely from your taxes, this provides an incentive for everyone, personal and commercial, to reduce the trash, which in turn will help keep the costs of trash disposal in check
- Our district joins 50 other Maine communities, large and small, that have adopted a User Plan.



PRSWDD
Budget Comparison Report
For the Twelve Months Ending December 31, 1998

	Current Month Actual	Current Month Budget	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Annual Budget
MEMBER TOWN REVENUES					
ADDISON	\$ 3,229.71	\$ 3,430.44	\$ 30,338.18	\$ 41,165.28	\$ 41,165.28
BEALS	1,935.76	2,061.81	18,234.36	24,741.83	24,741.83
CENTERVILLE	83.44	88.89	785.98	1,066.46	1,066.46
COLUMBIA	2,319.58	2,470.60	21,849.79	29,647.53	29,647.53
COLUMBIA FALLS	1,652.07	1,759.61	15,562.06	21,115.87	21,115.87
JONESBORO	1,735.51	1,848.30	16,348.03	22,182.33	22,182.33
JONESPORT	5,740.53	6,114.35	54,074.22	73,372.31	73,372.31
SUB TOTAL	16,687.60	17,774.20	157,192.82	213,291.61	213,291.61
OTHER SOURCES					
UNORGANIZED TLRP	0.00	0.00	5,179.00	5,179.00	5,179.00
PRRC PROFIT	0.00	0.00	14,560.76	11,200.00	11,200.00
FEMA - FELD EMBURG MANG AG	0.00	0.00	983.21	983.21	983.21
Large Scales	3,621.28	1,733.37	37,184.53	20,800.00	20,800.00
Small Scales	400.60	21.63	4,443.96	260.00	260.00
SUB TOTAL	4,021.88	1,755.00	62,351.46	38,422.21	38,422.21
FEES					
BULKY GOODS FEES	122.00	125.00	1,781.00	1,500.00	1,500.00
DEMOMERRIS FEES	308.20	666.63	7,734.90	8,000.00	8,000.00
TIRE FEES	6.00	33.37	430.00	400.00	400.00
SUB TOTAL	436.20	825.00	9,945.90	9,900.00	9,900.00
RECYCLE REVENUES					
MISC INCOME	0.00	0.00	369.86	0.00	0.00
RECYCLE METALS SMALL	21.00	100.00	265.41	1,200.00	1,200.00
RECYCLE METALS LARGE	0.00	180.00	4,526.40	2,160.00	2,160.00
RECYCLE CORR CARDBOARD	589.90	541.63	7,690.94	6,500.00	6,500.00
RECYCLE NEWSPAPER	0.00	166.63	2,140.58	2,900.00	2,900.00
RECYCLE PAPER BAGS	0.50	4.13	44.50	50.00	50.00
RECYCLE PLASTICS	0.00	75.00	0.00	900.00	900.00
RECYCLE RETURNABLES	77.40	50.00	558.25	600.00	600.00
Recycle Textiles	0.00	0.00	565.38	0.00	0.00
RECYCLE TIN CANS	0.00	16.63	0.00	200.00	200.00
RECYCLE OTHER INCOME	20.00	25.00	1,893.00	300.00	300.00
RECYCLE BATTERIES	0.00	16.63	96.00	200.00	200.00
SUB TOTAL	658.90	1,175.65	18,150.32	14,110.00	14,110.00
TOTAL REVENUES	21,801.48	21,529.85	247,640.30	275,723.82	275,723.82
EXPENSES					

PRSWDD
Budget Comparison Report
For the Twelve Months Ending December 31, 1998

	Current Month Actual	Current Month Budget	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Annual Budget
ACCOUNTING	0.00	250.00	0.00	3,000.00	3,000.00
ASH EXPENSES	0.00	0.00	5,911.32	0.00	0.00
CASH OVER/UNDER	<6.92>	0.00	<19.70>	0.00	0.00
DEMO DEBRIS EXP	919.37	1,333.37	14,183.93	16,000.00	16,000.00
MRC DUES	0.00	102.75	1,011.17	1,333.00	1,233.00
ELECTRIC	96.70	75.00	1,256.72	900.00	900.00
ELECTRIC - STREET LIGHT	10.53	9.95	124.09	119.40	119.40
EQUIPMENT LEASE EXPENSE	699.36	703.17	6,993.60	8,442.84	8,442.84
Forklift Lease Expense	319.53	0.00	1,747.65	0.00	0.00
FUEL - DEERE	115.13	116.63	770.22	1,400.00	1,400.00
FUEL - FORK LIFT	35.79	50.00	597.18	600.00	600.00
FUEL -- HEAT	23.51	29.87	239.84	250.00	250.00
INSURANCE - BOND	0.00	31.87	382.00	382.00	382.00
INSURANCE PACKAGE	775.25	127.15	2,711.25	1,525.58	1,525.58
INSURANCE - WORKERS COMP	463.50	217.25	2,927.50	2,607.00	2,607.00
LEGAL	0.00	250.00	3,107.17	3,000.00	3,000.00
MAINTENANCE - BUILDINGS	0.00	416.63	2,046.33	5,000.00	5,000.00
MAINTENANCE - EQUIPMENT	43.61	125.00	3,491.02	1,500.00	1,500.00
MANAGEMENT	833.33	833.37	9,999.96	10,000.00	10,000.00
MISCELLANEOUS	832.18	833.37	3,684.88	10,000.00	10,000.00
NOTE PAYMENT-MACHIAS SAV	854.37	854.37	10,252.44	10,252.44	10,252.44
NOTE PAYMENT - SCALES	375.53	375.53	4,506.36	4,506.36	4,506.36
PAYROLL TAX EXPENSE	519.57	400.25	6,301.95	4,803.00	4,803.00
Postage	32.00	33.37	281.22	400.00	400.00
RECYCLE BLDG/EQUIP PAYMEN	1,431.85	1,431.85	17,182.20	17,182.20	17,182.20
RECYCLE EXP - EDUCATION	0.00	20.87	101.75	250.00	250.00
Contract Tows - payment	41.28	0.00	1,115.64	0.00	0.00
RECYCLE EXP - MISC	0.00	41.63	3,554.90	500.00	500.00
RECYCLE EXP - SUPPLIES	0.00	4.13	954.59	50.00	50.00
RECYCLE PAYROLL	1,231.25	916.63	13,355.26	11,000.00	11,000.00
SNOW REMOVAL & SAND	0.00	0.00	1,174.00	1,180.00	1,180.00
SUPPLIES	118.51	733.37	9,049.40	8,800.00	8,800.00
SURVEY EXPENSES	120.00	0.00	883.60	0.00	0.00
TELEPHONE	84.58	120.87	1,096.27	1,450.00	1,450.00
TIPPING AT PHRC	5,417.87	7,261.00	58,042.66	87,132.00	87,132.00
TRANSPORTATION TO PERC	1,927.10	2,671.50	21,563.44	32,058.00	32,058.00
SUPERVISION COSTS	2,267.98	1,408.37	18,986.23	16,900.00	16,900.00
PAYROLL OTHER	2,190.63	1,066.63	17,871.26	12,800.00	12,800.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	21,804.48	22,837.15	247,640.30	275,223.82	275,223.82
NET PROFIT (LOSS)	\$ 0.00	\$ <1,307.30>	\$ 0.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

How Towns Pay In and Get Credit Back

Interviews for the article on user fees at the transfer station elicited another question about Pleasant River Solid Waste Disposal District (PRSWDD) and money: whether member towns hadn't already paid to land their trash there with the appropriations raised in last spring's annual town meetings.

Executive Director Lee Yeaton explained in a telephone interview the following day that appropriations raised in town meetings are expended on a month-by-month basis as towns are billed for their share of the actual month. Unexpended appropriations are not rolled over for future years, he said, and towns are never billed for expenses which are not actually incurred, and they definitely do not pay twice.

Asked how the proceeds of paid bags, pounds over the scales, and recycling were returned to towns, Yeaton explained that towns will retain the proceeds from bag sales, and money collected on PRSWDD from pounds over the scales will be credited on each town's monthly bill at the same percentage at which each town is billed for the previous month's operating cost. Any revenue realized from the sale of recyclables is credited in a similar manner.

Thus, he said, if the 55,000 pounds of cardboard currently stockpiled at PRSWDD could be sold at \$1.15 per ton, which was the price earlier this year, the district would realize a profit of \$3,163. The Town of Jonesport would receive a credit of approximately \$1,088, or 34.4 percent of the district profit, the same percentage at which Jonesport's share of operating costs is calculated. Shares of operating costs are set by the one-town-one-member board of directors and are based on population plus commercial trash production.

If the user fee system reduces PRSWDD's waste stream as it has elsewhere, Yeaton predicts that \$60,000 in trucking and tipping fees at the Penobscot Energy Recovery Corporation (PERC) can be saved annually, out of an escalating total annual operating budget of \$290,000. If PRSWDD's residents become super recyclers, he says, operating costs could go down 75 percent. That should be good news for Jonesport Second Selectman Howard Mills, who noted early in the meeting, "We're paying half as much to dump our trash as we are to educate our kids."

—N.A.

User Fee Plan Less Than 3 Months Away

The Pleasant River Transfer Station serving the towns of Addison, Centerville, Columbia Falls, Jonesboro, Columbia, Jonesport and Seals will be going to a user-fee plan come January. Pamphlets explaining the plan are available at the transfer station.

Residents will be asked to buy 30-gallon plastic bags from their town office, which will be the only bags accepted at the transfer station. Individuals can bring in the bags as usual or pay a hauler—who does not mix the paid bags with the other trash—to bring them in for you.

Another option will be to make arrangements with any other hauler, who mixes or uses a packer truck, and pay by the pound without purchasing the special bags.

Recyclable items will still be taken free at the station along with metals, wood and brush, cat litter, wallboard and used oil. Items donated to the "Too Good to Toss" trailer are also free.

The Pleasant River Transfer Station will be joining 50 other Maine communities that have adopted a user plan. Other communities that use the plan report an increase in illegal dumping on the roads or in the woods, but say it returns to the current level within six months.

Districts using the plan have seen a 25-percent increase in recycling and a 30-percent to 50-percent decrease in the amount of trash sent to PERC to be burned.

Towns will be billed as usual but will keep the money from the bags purchased. The amount of billing will be reduced by the money collected from commercial haulers and others paying by the pound. Also, if more recycling is done, costs will go down.

Residents are being encouraged to recycle, reduce, reuse, compost, buy better and burn to keep the costs down.



**THE
BAGS ARE
IN!**

PLEASANT RIVER SOLID
WASTE DISPOSAL DISTRICT
P.O. Box 222 • Addison 04606
483-4490 • FAX 483-4553
pleasantbay@nemaine.com

**PURCHASE AT YOUR
TOWN OFFICE:**
30 gallon—\$1
15 gallon—50¢
-OR-
Small Scales
at \$.05 per lb.
Large Commercial
Scales at \$.04 per lb.

New System Starts
Sat., January 3, 1998

Pleasant River Transfer Station Saving Taxpayers Money

Pay-Per-Bag System Halved Towns' Costs In First Quarter of '97

By NANCY BEAL

When the directors of the Pleasant River Solid Waste District (PRSWDD) installed a pay-per-bag system last January, they hoped for a 50 percent reduction in trashage, which would save the towns \$60,000 a year in trucking and tipping fees. Instead, according to executive director Leona Yeaton, the figures for the first three months of user pay indicate a reduction of 36 percent, which, if continued, will translate into a district savings of \$81,000 per year at current prices.

The district was formed in 1994 after the state banned open landfills. Addison, Centerdale, Columbia Falls and Jonesboro consolidated their solid waste transfer stations in Jonesboro, Columbia Falls. In that year, those four towns generated 824 tons of trash, according to Yeaton. In 1995, the towns of Columbia, Beal and Jonesboro joined and increased the district's solid waste by 60 percent. In 1997, overall trashage had risen to 2,055 tons. Since the increased trashage was not accompanied by an equal increase in revenues, directors opted for pay-per-bag in hopes of reducing trashage. Figures projected from those of this year's first quarter indicate that trashage district could return to the 1994, pre-Jonesboro/Beal/Columbia level.

Bag Sales Further Reduce Costs

The district is governed by a board of directors made up of one representative from each town, regardless of population. Although some budgets annually for solid waste removal, they pay only actual operating costs. Towns are billed monthly for a percentage of those costs based on their population and trash-generating businesses. The current option is driving those costs down dramatically.

The first quarterly figures for the district's solid waste in 1997 was \$32,440. That figure dropped to \$20,450 for the first quarter this year, a reduction of 37 percent, which was passed along to towns in the form of monthly bills that were 35 percent lower than last year's. Because towns may also keep the revenues from bag sales—50 cents for smaller ones, a dollar for larger—their net savings estimate will further.

During the quarter, the quarterly savings in reduced operating costs of \$20,978 is augmented by total bag sales of \$12,081, which produces the overall 36 percent net reduction noted above. Individual towns' overall savings vary according to revenue from the sale of the bags.

Decrease In Trash Taxes Varies 30 Percent

On the even money towns, including bag sales, Addison, Jonesboro and Centerdale show the largest net cost decrease (amount of tax money needed to be raised to find such savings). Addison's monthly bill for operating costs were down from \$11,472 in the first quarter of 1997 to \$7,423 in 1998. Jonesboro's \$4,154 in bag sale revenue (nearly double that of any other town in the district), Addison's net tax decrease for waste removal is 73.5 percent.

Jonesboro's share of operating costs went down from \$6,382 in 1997 to \$3,595 this year. With bag sales of \$2,251, its net cost decrease is 71.7 percent. Centerdale declined from 1997 to 1998 and, with bag sales of \$94, reduced costs needed for waste by 69 percent. Addison pays 19 percent of the district's operating costs, Jonesboro 10.4 and Centerdale .5 percent.

Columbia Falls, which pays 19 percent of the district's bill, realized a net decrease of 64.6 percent, plus its quarterly bill dropped from \$5,885 to \$3,807 and \$1,000 worth of bags were sold. Beal's net tax savings so far were 52 percent for the quarter, based on a decline in costs from \$6,895 last year to \$4,468 this and \$1,143 in bag

sales. Beal contributes 11.6 percent of the district's budget.

Jonesport, which, because of its businesses as well as its population, foots over a third of the district's costs (34.4 percent), realized a net reduction of 48 percent in tax money needed for solid waste. Jonesport paid \$13,227 for the first three months of 1998 compared to \$20,447 last year. Bagsales totaled \$2,604. Columbia, which pays 14 percent of the district's expenses, dropped 42.7 percent, the result of a quarterly reduction from \$8,262 in 1997 to \$5,345. The comparatively lower percentage results from the low volume of bag sales, yielding only \$615.50.

What's in a Bag?

Taken and Now

Before instituting the pay-per-bag system, PRSWDD directors conducted a survey of 40 bags of trash, selected at random from all towns, the contents of which were sorted into 29 categories and weighed. The results showed that 35 percent of what was thrown away was paper products, 30 percent food waste, and 1 percent returnable containers. That has changed, as taxpayers are burning paper and composting much food waste.

Recently, Yeaton said he asked his three backhoe operators, manager Linda Snowdon of Jonesboro and her helpers Tom Higgins of Columbia Falls and Ernie Andrews of Millbridge, "tell me what's different."

Separately, they all replied similarly. "No ice," was their first comment. Previously, when weight was not a factor for consumers, trash bags came in with "huge amounts" of ice, they told Yeaton. Since trucking and tipping are charged by weight, the district was paying to haul away what would turn to water at eight to nine pounds per gallon, and be drained at PRRC. Two other categories that have almost disappeared, he said they reported, are cans and glass. Returnables, they said, are "a rare sight."

Rush of Recyclables

May Create Paid Job

Although revenues from recyclables won't be known until the end of the year, Yeaton says there has been a "dramatic increase" of them being deposited, free of charge, in the specially marked bins in the transfer station's new building. The marked increase in recyclables was anticipated by directors, he said, and they have already considered hiring a fourth person to help deal with them. If plans to accept, bale, sell and share the profits of recyclables from other districts come to fruition, another hand will definitely be needed. Yeaton says he would like to see the job go to an ambitious retiree.

PRSWDD currently pays \$13.50 per hour for its manager and \$7.50 for other staffers. As recyclables become more and more a factor, the 28-hour weeks which staffers currently work may expand to 40 and include health insurance, Yeaton said. He added that volunteers are needed for the "Too Good To Toss" shed, which eventually will get a new home and which he envisions as a free store that a retired couple might manage.

Litter Not Greatly Increased

Prior to going to the user-pay system, Yeaton had predicted an increase in roadside litter for about six months, after which conditions would return to what they had been prior to the paid bags being introduced. That increase has not come to pass, he said last week, after the snow had melted and an assessment could be made. He blamed most of the litter from trash headed to the transfer station on the open trucks that haul it in violation of a state law that nobody enforces. He said any increase in litter would be the responsibility of litterers, not PRSWDD's paid bag system.

Volunteer cleanup crews will be allowed to toss what they collect for free at the transfer station, Yeaton explained, as long as the town or group for which they are working writes the district, explains the cleanup program, and designates a specific day when trash can be dumped for free. Arrangements can be made by calling the transfer station at 483-3844.

To those who still complain that separating trash, burning, composting, and using special bags is "too much work," Yeaton replies that it is an option, not the law. Individuals can still do what they have always done: toss everything into one bag and pay a hauler a dollar a bag, or have it weighed at Pleasant River and pay 5 cents per pound. Others can opt to separate, burn, compost and recycle and save themselves, and all the taxpayers of the district, some money. At least, he says, there is a choice, and those who choose to do the extra work now need not pay for those who don't.

Transfer Station Makes Annual Report

In this year's town report the Pleasant River Solid Waste Disposal District explains their reasons for going to a user fee system.

The board of directors is charged with the disposal of trash from the member towns in the most economical way. After several years of discussion and research, they concluded that the only way to make any dent in the rising costs of trash disposal was to reduce the amount of trash produced by member communities. Using the examples of other communities that have gone to a user fee system, several things combine to lower the amount of trash. First there is an increase in recycling; second, an increase in backyard composting and third, an increase in backyard burning in burn barrels. Also, people change habits in purchasing package materials. There is an increase in illegal dumping "which in all cases returned to its original level after about six months," says the report.

In 1997 the transfer station sent just one additional ton of trash to PERC over the 1996 figure (2,054 versus 2,055), which averaged .355 tons per person. The cost of tipping with PERC rose \$2.14, averaging \$49.48, and transportation rose 62 cents to \$21.28. The cost per

ton was up \$18.80 to \$123.86 and the cost per person was \$43.94, a \$6.71 increase over 1996. Recycling tonnage last year was 322 tons, down from 348 tons in 1996.

Preparing for the changeover to the user fee system in 1998 was cited as one of the reasons for the increased costs in 1997. Other costs included \$8,000 for paving done at the transfer station along with \$18,684 for more payments on both the scales and the new recycling building and equipment. Increases were also seen in the electric, ripping and transportation costs.

"We expect many changes in 1998—not the least of which is the lowering of the amount of trash taken to PERC by 40 percent (2,055 tons down to 1,200 tons) at an annual savings of about \$60,000 per year," states the report. "In addition, we expect to have a sizable increase in recycle material, from which we will receive either a profit or at least a lower disposal cost per ton. ... The budget for 1998 indicates a 16.2 percent reduction at the transfer station using only a 20 percent reduction of trash—

reaching the 40 percent reduction level will mean an additional \$30,000 reduction or an additional 12 percent. The amount to be budgeted by the towns to be paid for by taxation after collecting for the paid bags is reduced by an average of 46 percent with this budget. ... The reason for this reduction is clear—transferring some of the responsibility of the financial cost of disposal from the tax base to those that actually produce the trash."

Bag fees already saving towns money

By Mary Anne Clancy
Of the NEWS Staff

COLUMBIA FALLS — The new pay-per-bag system at the Pleasant River Solid Waste Disposal District is just 3 months old and savings to the seven member towns are even higher than anticipated, according to Leon Yeaton, executive director.

During the first three months of last year, Addison, Beals, Centerville, Columbia, Columbia Falls, Jonesboro and Jonesport paid a total of \$59,440.24 to the district. This year, the first-quarter bill for those towns is \$38,450.

"That's a reduction of 35 percent," Yeaton said. "When the towns apply their bag fees to their bill, the savings to the tax rolls is 56 percent."

Yeaton said trash delivered to the transfer station in January, February and March is down by 188 tons, or 56 percent, from the first three months of 1997.

The 56 percent drop is higher than the 46 percent drop projected by the district board of directors, and if the low tonnage continues, the district would save \$81,000 in tipping fees and transportation this year, he said.

Workers at the transfer station are seeing the changes in their day-to-day work, and the recycling bins are filling up, he said. The district won't have solid figures on recycling tonnage until the material is

sold, but transfer station staffers report few glass containers or cans in the bags, he said.

Another item missing from the bags is ice, which comes from leaving rubbish outside where water can build up in the barrel, he said. Other changes are taking place as well.

"To my amazement, there's a tremendous increase in backyard composting, and people are giving a lot more thought to packaging," Yeaton said.

The move to a fee-per-bag system came after almost two years of work by the district board of directors, which comprises a representative from each of the seven member towns, he said.

The Pleasant River Solid Waste Disposal District began as a transfer station serving four towns in

January 1994. The district took in 824 tons of waste the first year and progressed from essentially no recycling to a 33 percent recycling rate in two years. Waste tonnage took off when Columbia, Jonesport and Beals joined in 1995. There was no increase in recycling to offset the increase in solid waste, Yeaton said.

Transfer station tonnage increased to 3,056 in 1997, he said, and as tonnage increased, so did solid waste disposal costs. It got to the point that waste disposal became the second- or third-largest item in many municipal budgets, he said.

In Yeaton's own town of Addison, which has a population of just over 1,000 people, the solid waste budget went from \$17,800 for the town landfill in 1992 to \$49,600 in 1997.

"The district board took a hard look at all the options and decided even if we put a lot of money and time into recycling and it was successful, we still weren't going to go above the 33 percent recycling level," he said.

Meanwhile, Yeaton compiled information on the 29 Maine towns that had moved to user fees. He found that the towns experienced a 36 percent to 50 percent reduction in trash and a 25 percent increase in recycling.

For the next 2 1/2 years, Yeaton said he attended town meetings in all the member towns and explained the district's plan to reduce tonnage by instituting user fees. As of January, all the member towns began selling the bags for \$1.

**SKETCH
OF
PHYSICAL LAYOUT
OF
PLEASANT RIVER**

